

1949

Let not my tears fall unnoticed.

I lay down in the grass with the sun warm on my face, a spinning inside my head like a galaxy in the throes of birth, was it a birth or a rebirth. At the time I just felt. There was no thought; I felt. The warmth, the color of my closed eyelids filtering the sunlight, danced in my mind, blood red. But there was no thought - only experience. The grass touched my elbow; I saw ants crawling up my arm. I almost leaped up slapping at the ants, but I remained still. A shadow crossed my face. The minute coolness dispelled the thought. The ants vanished. Again, in stillness, without a thought, my eyes opened at just the moment a hawk swooped down to snatch a sparrow from the tree branch directly above me. I cried. I felt the despair of the sparrow and the triumph of the hawk. A salty tear formed in my field of vision. With that single blurry eye I saw the truth in a drop of water. I saw eternity

in a grain of sand. Through the apparent polarity of the triumph and despair there was no evil. All was. Being. Singular diversity grew: a monad of scattered unity decomposed into the great lizard of time. I saw the dragon without fear as I cried a single tear. Eternity grew in a cascade of light vibrations in color variations of intensity and density, concentrations of energy, matter. The logos emanated in a web of knitted energy-matter, substance. Did it matter? Reason? What intelligence?

In a moment I saw eternity. I rode the dragon on a sea of darkness and light. I looked more closely at the scales of the serpentine beast on whose back I rode. I peered, squinting, and I saw my body lying there, eyes closed. The hawk devoured the sparrow. I cried a single tear: LOGOS, The Word.

This was the seminal experience of my lifetime to date. I realized, and I had to share with mankind the truth. But I had no words, only tears - these tears I share.

"I'm not alone"

I thought, "There is no way! I never saw the body. The closed casket had to be empty. Laraine, the only love of my life can't be gone. There is no way this could have happened to me." I cried and cried. My tears fell like rain to the dust and were consumed as if they never were. "How could this be?"

I felt alone.

I slammed my fist into the hanger wall - I felt angry at the world and especially angry at God. "She was a good woman; she was the love of my life the only person I could ever love like that." Tears of rage flew from my eyes and I didn't care. I thrashed about mad with unbridled grief. I cried in anger for the unjust loss of my beloved. I thought, "If I find that snow plough operator I will kill him! If I find that accursed machine, I will destroy that snow plow too. I will find out who made it and destroy them too. Someone made the steel. Someone invented that machine, the destroyer of life."

It's their fault! All of them, all of Rushville; it is their fault!" I cried.

Maybe if I was better person, behaved better, God wouldn't have taken her so violently from me. I resolved to do better. I thought, "if only God would bring her back to me I will never miss church again; I will go to church every Sunday. I will never get angry at her. I will bring her flowers every day and always have a smile when I look in her eyes." I cried. I could be better.

But God wouldn't bring Laraine back. I was alone. It was my fault she went out that day. I felt terrible. There was no reason to go on. My life had no meaning. I had no reason to awake and get up in the morning. I didn't want to work or eat. There was no laughter left in me. I cried tears of despair. I pulled my pistol from its holster I laid it against my head and I cried. I set it down and stared at it. I thought, "...she is watching me..." I cried.

"If I can't pull that trigger I have to move on. She is still here." I felt her in my gut. She wanted me to go on with life. I cried. I pulled out my date book, got dressed and walked outside. I walked the miles to the hanger thinking of her. I had crops to dust. My tears moistened the dust of the dirt road upon which I walked. I didn't care who saw my tears; if they said anything they'd get the wrath!

Days turned into weeks; weeks turned into months. I kept up the sharade of life. I did the things a man does. I ate; I washed; I worked; I slept; I cried. I missed her so much, but I buried my grief. I wanted to hold her to hear her call my name. I was forever distracted from reality. I longed for my beloved. I felt bruised - a giant purple contusion. I kept moving; I went through the motions of life.

One day, I had just finished dusting a huge field of corn. I landed my bi-plane on the Nebraska plain and sat down in the shade of the wings as I often did to have my lunch. I thought

of my beautiful Laraine gone forever from my side. Full of sorrow, with tears falling from my eyes, I drifted off to sleep.

A castle rose up before me. Behind I felt a shadow of the Moon. A dagger in my breast collapsed my heart and, at that moment, there appeared a knight. In her hand was a grail, her golden locks fell in rivulets across enameled plate, blue like lappis embossed with a golden sparrow. The Sun shined down; his golden tears struck the earth splashing, engulfing her in light. A lion poised to attack lurked nearby. A ray of golden sunshine struck the lion in the eye; it held the Sun firmly in its jaws. I watched as it slowly turned green, the color of cedar and sat down on its hind quarters. The knight raised her sword. As she smote a mighty blow, the sky went dark and only the Moon illumed the scene. I heard the screech of a hawk. The lion was gone, but in its place was a rabbit as white as the snow, freshly fallen. Bewildered, I glanced behind and all around, but the lion was nowhere to be

found. In the silver light I did happen to see a burrow, a small hole in the earth, an entrance to the womb of the Mother, a portal to what lies beyond. Testing the air with twitching nose, down the hole, the rabbit dove. A hawk swooped down; missing its prey, it arched back up to the sky. My mind did follow the rabbit as the burrow grew wide enough to accommodate two. I bent doubled over to peer into the earth I looked up and a honey colored drop from the Sun did land upon my head just between my lachrymal glands. Centered it was between my eyes and sticky-struck I cursed my luck and fell in the hole tumbling down and feeling small and small and smaller still. I noticed no light and I turned with fright and darkness fell and so did I, deeper and deeper down I fell inside. I fell so long and fell so far and suddenly I a purchase found; I stood once more my feet on solid ground. I closed my eyes not wanting to see tho darkness was all there was, all around me darkness was. To my surprise my open eyes could see. I stood on a sandbar of solid sulfur surrounded by a quicksilver sea. A craft, a ship, was navigating the waters

underground. As I looked on, I knew all the metels that made up the ship. There was silver, copper and gold; iron, lead and tin; I knew for sure without any words and without a thought all the metels of which the craft was wrought. The spaces BETWEEN where ethaer filled, the stuff of dreams, the stuff of mind - spirit divine; if I looked even farther I knew I would find the dust of the stars and substance fine. There was a pattern to it all; I knew if I could remember that pattern I would have the recipe for the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life - quintessence. Looking up I saw the stars, and looking down I saw again the stars. The night sky below and the night sky above all the same all different, all inside. No language would come. I missed her; I cried. I felt her so near and so far away. I missed her; I cried honey'd tears.

I saw two monks in rough spun wool; one was short the other tall. They walked along a path. Around the bend was a river of mud, and on the other side they saw a maiden delicate,

fastidious in a lady's dress, pristine. She had a look of trouble about her, creasing furrows on her beautiful face. The shorter monk asked her, "What is troubling you my lady?" To which she answered with pouting lip and cried, "I have no way to cross to the other side. This awful mud will surely spoil my dress!" The taller monk gathered his cowl in his hand, crossed the slippery mud, picked up the maiden and deposited her safe and clean on dry ground. The monks continued on their way, traveling the rest of a long day. When they finally arrived at the monestery gate the shorter monk asked the taller one, "Why did you pick up that young lady and carry her across the mud? We are not supposed to touch or associate with women, especially not young and pretty women." In answer the taller monk replied, "I left that young lady at the bank of the muddy river; how long have you been carrying her?"

I found myself lying on the ground; rain poured from the clouds. I was cold, shivering. I was not sure how I had gotten so far from town. Night approached rapidly as I

hurried to the warmth of home and hearth. The rain quickly became a storm. The wind-blown rain lashed my body.

Lightning struck close; I felt the shock. My heart skipped a beat, and I continued faster than ever before. I began to run.

I veered from the road hoping to cut short my journey by passing through the field. Row upon muddy row of corn barely

waist high scratched at my arms. How far have I run; surely

town must be just ahead. I could see nothing through the

growing darkness and torrents of rain. A dirt track opened

up before me. I remember thinking that I had never noticed a road here before; there was neither tractor road nor trail.

One would think that flying above a field while spraying for

locust would reveal a dirt track such as this; it would be

obvious. I followed the trail. The further I ran the less it

rained. Tired from the exertion and not feeling as cold, I

slowed my pace to a brisk walk and then I could see now

through the drizzle that the row crops had disappeared,

replaced by dense undergrowth and old forest trees. I was

somewhat bewildered because I knew there was not supposed to

be a forest anything close to this extent for many miles around. But the dirt track continued, and I kept walking, too afraid to veer from the course for fear of becoming lost in terrain from who knew where. The tractor road was now more of a path with vines and briars encroaching on my egress. I had to slow my pace further to avoid being scratched to ribbons and...

I noticed -----as the trees INCREASED in size
the density of the brush DECREASED.

Eventually I was able to walk comfortably: the rain had stopped, the brush thinned and receded, and there was a gentle breeze moving between the trees. The path was soft beneath my feet as I walked on a carpet of leaves moistened and long decayed. Then, there was a pebble in my shoe. With each step I felt this pebble; it wasn't pain so much as a nagging awareness. I continued walking, each step bringing my awareness back to the pebble. That pebble was my center, the center of the universe for me in those moments. I wept for the

irritation of it, but I didn't stop to remove it. Those tears washed all that was false from me. I knew it. It was a gut feeling; it was an intuitive knowing. But then another step and I felt the pebble and it drew my awareness back to the center; tears washed my cheeks. Why couldn't I stop and remove that pebble. I wanted to stop, but I was not able. I had to continue. Was this intentional suffering or was I being compelled by some unknown force to keep walking with that pebble in my shoe? The internal dialog ceased. The air smelled clean with a hint of decaying leaf matter. The air felt cool on my skin and almost cold beneath my wet cloths. I felt them clinging to my skin. It did not matter. I felt the pebble again. I could taste the air: earthy, alive. I could see clearly through the old growth forest though the light was dim from the shade. The pebble hit my foot again. I was aware that all of my senses were at full effect. I was aware of everything around and inside. My mind wandered, wondering where this path led and where I was. The pebble brought me

back. I saw a clearing ahead; without thinking, my pace increased.

...there was that pebble again.

Behold, a pale horse was coming my way. Rider-less and out of control it came toward me charging at top speed, nostrils flaring in panic. It was the very image of death. Was this my death before me? A tear formed in my eye. I was not afraid. Without fear shedding a tear I awaited my fate. Calm and relaxed with a stillness of mind I stood. Visualizing Laraine, I closed my eyes now tearless. I expected to feel pain as the steed crushed me beneath flailing hoof, but the blow never came. I opened my eyes. The darkness had fallen thick around me. I saw a light ahead.

It was a lantern carried by an old man in rough-spun wool robes, cowl drawn down and head bowed. He approached at a slow but steady pace. When he was about three paces from me he stopped. He said, "Seawater is both healthy and not healthy."

I noticed the contradiction and replied, "If a man drinks seawater he will die. How is it healthy?"

Laughing he answered, "Sea water is unhealthy for man to drink, but safe for fishes! Come, follow me. Are you hungry? I have a fire and some fish to fry." Without waiting for an answer he turned and strode off at a brisk walk. I followed.

"If you do not expect the unexpected you will not find it, for it is not to be reached by search or trail. If you expect nothing it is already found. The best people renounce all for one goal, the eternal flame of mortals; but most people stuff themselves like cattle. The way up and the way down are one and the same. Do you understand?"

Without pausing for my reply he went on, "When I was a young man I was very well educated. I read all the right books and attended all the great schools. I was near bursting with knowledge. I knew it all, or so, I thought. I heard about a great teacher from the East. He was said to have miraculous power, and he was visiting the city I was in. I used all my

credentials to get a private audience with him". The old man turned and continued, "I walked into his room; he was just sitting down to tea. He asked me why I wanted to see him, and if I would like a cup of tea. I told him I did and asked him if he would teach me the ways of the miraculous? Then I proceeded to tell him about what I knew of the miraculous. He set a tea cup and saucer on the table and began to pour. He poured until the cup was full and he kept pouring. The cup began to overflow and he kept pouring. The saucer overflowed. I thought he would just keep on pouring; so, I stopped him. Then he said to me, "You want me to teach you, but before I can you must first empty the cup..." Later I thought about what he said. I returned with a different attitude. I told him, "I will sell all my riches to buy the single pearl. I never want to see another teacher nor do I have the desire to attend another university." But that was not to be I was left to my own with this advice: "now that you are empty there is room for a special knowing. Always be aware of where you place your attention. That on which you place your attention

is that witch you love." I found after many tears of sufferings and hard work that all I needed was within me. Like a mustard seed grows into a giant cedar my understanding grew as I worked and practiced the way he showed me. As I became more attentive inner spirit became my master.

A tear began to form in his eye and fell to his cheek. A small bottle appeared in his hand and he caught the tear in it; replacing the cork, he slid it back inside his sleeve. That bottle looked nearly half full. I later found out; it was a lacrymatory bottle: "You tell my wanderings; you put my tears into your bottle; are they not in Your Book?" I thought of the pebble in my shoe... What Book? ...the Book of Life?

The old man turned back around and continued on his way. We walked perhaps another hundred yards when the forest opened up into a ring about fifty yards around with a tiny hut in the center. I felt the pebble in my shoe again rubbing against the arch of my foot. I followed him inside the hut and stopped. The interior was dark like a cave. I could hear

him shuffle around and a LIGHT penetrated the darkness. I MOVED to the chair he indicated and I sat down, RESTING. I took off my shoe. I poured the pebble onto the cobble stone floor of the tiny hut. The old man in a monk's robes picked up the pebble and carried it closer to the lantern and rolled it in his fingers. He asked, "It is an Apache Tear, where did you get it?"

"It was in my shoe."

"I saw it roll out, but where did you get it; how did it get in your shoe?"

"I don't know. I was walking on the path and I felt the discomfort of a pebble in my shoe. It wasn't there and then it was there. I didn't intentionally put it in my shoe."

"Didn't you? ... There was a war party of Apache that had been on a raid against a cavalry troop. They stole several horses from the soldiers. But, in the process, the sentry was able to alert the other soldiers before he could be silenced. Though

the Apache counted many battle honors, they had to flee from the superior firepower of the cavalry. The soldiers were quickly mounted and in pursuit. From dawn to nearly dusk the brave warriors stayed ahead of the cavalry, but as darkness approached the soldiers began to gain ground on the Apache war party. With the soldiers in sight the warriors came to a dead stop at a bluff. Not willing to be captured, they all simultaneously jumped from the high cliff. Not one survived. The next day, when their men didn't return the wives of the war party went in search of their husbands only to find the remains of the war party at the foot of the bluff. Their grief was so great that their tears flowed heavy, and the Great Spirit was so moved by the sacrifice of the warriors that he turned those tears to stones. These stones are called Apache Tears in remembrance of the grief of the women and the sacrifice of their brave warriors."

He sat down on the bunk. I saw a tear forming in his eye and out came the small bottle again, and with practiced precision he caught that tear and the bottle disappeared up his sleeve.

again. My eyes adjusted to the dim light, and I looked around. The chair I was sitting on was next to a small table with an untitled book and a Greek Bible stacked neatly at the upper left corner with a fountain pen next to them. Above the table there was an icon of the Holy Transfiguration in the Byzantine fashion. There was a pot belly wood stove and an open cabinet containing dry goods next to it. Above the cabinet, herbs hung drying. The only other furnishings were the bed with a niche above it containing an icon of Christ, several small bottles, and another book entitled "Philokalia" in Greek characters. The only light source was the lantern that hung from the center of the ceiling. The room smelled of a mixture of herbs and body odor. In the wall across from the table was another niche with a shelf. On the shelf were two un-lit candles, an incense burner and an icon of Mary Mother of Jesus, a very short bench was on the floor below the shelf. In all it was a modest cell much like I imagined a solitary monk would occupy. After this period of silence in which he sat still with upright posture, he said,

"All experiences are preceded by mind, having mind as their master, created by mind. Just one thing I ask of you; there is just one thing I need...stillness. For in the stillness of the mind and body lies the divine consciousness: this is the Kingdom of God. This body and these things around it have no value; they matter not, except they touch mind. It is that which is in my-self and your-self that has more value than any treasure on earth. Meditate ...do not delay, lest you later regret it." He handed the pebble back to me. It felt moist; was it crying?

After several minutes that seemed an eternity he asked me if I wasn't hungry. I told him that I could eat. He stood and shuffled over to the kitchen area of the hut. He lit a fire in the stove, pulled out a deep skillet and poured water from a skin bladder in the skillet and waited for it to come to a boil. He turned to me and said: "I really have no fishes, but I would like to tell you a story that illustrates the position you are in relative to the divine." I sat back to listen.

"There was a thief living in the low countries of Europe. He was not an ordinary thief; he was a master thief who had practiced his art for many years honing his skill and tactics. He didn't steal just anything either. He was proud of his art and his mastery. His specialty was diamonds - beautiful and valuable.

Diamonds were the only object worthy of his talents. He prowled Antwerp, the diamond capital of the world; more than half of all diamonds sold in the world went through its four block diamond district. This was his territory, his haunt. He knew every square inch and all of the shadows in between. His favorite method was to lurk about a cafe on the main street; he liked to sit at a corner table by the window sipping an espresso. From there he could look out on the center of the world's diamond trade. During business hours, Hasidic men wearing broad-brimmed hats hurried past with satchels locked to their wrists. There were Africans in bright blue suits, Hindoo merchants wearing monocles around their necks, and bald Armenians with reading glasses pushed up on

their speckled heads. He presented himself as a gem importer based in Milan, Italy, and scheduled meetings with numerous dealers. He bought small stones, paid cash, dressed well, and cheerfully mangled the French language. The dealers probably never knew that they had just welcomed one of the world's best jewel thieves into their circle. In this way he discovered that a most valuable diamond was to arrive at a certain broker and was expected to be bought by a particular trader. He learned the traders name; he had his mark. Now he stalked his prey. He needed to know who this man was that would buy the diamond; what were his habits, where did he eat, where did he drink, where did he spend the night. He watched his prey from the shadows or hiding in plain sight. His marks never knew they were being hunted. This was his game this is what a master thief did. The transaction date approached. He knew his man better than the man's own brother. He waited outside the brokerage. Finally the mark emerged. This was a professional: his mannerisms consistent. He gave nothing away with tells; one could not be sure that

the transaction had even occurred. Then he saw it. The mark patted his left breast pocket. It was lightly done and certainly unintentional. The thief emerged from hiding and swiftly but without any hurry he casually bumped his prey. Deftly, his hand slid into the gentleman's coat pocket: and found nothing. No! Quickly he checked the pocket on the other side, moving inconspicuously away he blended into the crowd. He was unsuccessful; he missed the mark! Incredulous! He never failed. How many years had gone by since he last failed to claim the prize? What had gone wrong? He began to review the whole plan in his mind - each step; he could think of nothing. The diamond should have been in that pocket. He followed his quarry from a distance careful, however, not to lose sight of the mark. He closed distance when they arrived at the man's hotel. His prey went straight to his room without a stop. Later that night when the man was having his evening meal he searched the man's hotel room to no avail. Carefully placing everything back in order he slipped back out into the night, turning in the direction of

his prey's favorite restaurant." At this point in the story the water in the skillet began to boil and the hermit added a few handfuls of some grain from a sack and a pinch of salt from a smaller bag to the water and continued his story: "Arriving at the restaurant he saw his mark leaving the establishment right on time. The diamond must be in another pocket. He tried three pockets in quick succession and still came up empty handed. He was really disturbed; his mind was almost in a panic; where could that diamond be? He slept none that night, tossing and turning in his bed until dawn. He rose from bed determined to find out what had happened. How had that man foiled him? Finally, in desperation he decided to confront the man and ask him directly what he had done with the diamond.

He arrived at the man's hotel room and waited, still reviewing in his mind all that had happened, trying to determine what had gone wrong - nothing. Then the man appeared. He walked straight up to the mark and began to explain everything. He told the man that he was a master thief who in all of thirty-

five years had never failed to collect what he set out to steal. Then, humbly, he asked the man, 'How did you do it? Where did you hide that diamond?' The man replied, 'I saw you watching me and suspected what you might be up to; so, I hid it where you would never expect.' The man reached out a hand to the thief's own pocket and plucked out the diamond and continued, 'in your own pocket.' Flabbergasted he turned and left the man with his diamond; he had never suspected the diamond was in his own pocket all along. Do you understand?" I shook my head no.

He went on to explain, "Have you heard the parable of the pearl of great price from the Gospel of Matthew? It translates something like: 'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.' The diamond from my story is, like the treasure, a metaphor for the Kingdom of God. In Luke Jesus says something like, 'Behold, the kingdom of God is within you.' Do not run from here to there seeking the truth like the thief searched all

over for the diamond. You see, after all that searching, the thief realized the diamond was in his own pocket; similarly, the Kingdom of God is in you and has been there all along.

That is the Good News!" With that statement the hermit shed a tear and deftly caught it in his small bottle. Slipping the lachrymatory bottle back up his sleeve, he stirred the gruel that was thickening in the skillet. I wondered at my strange situation. Where was I? Was I dreaming? I had to be dreaming. But it all seemed so real.

I asked the monk, "If it's been inside me all along why don't I know it? How could I know it?"

He answered, "in the words of St Isaiah the Solitary from the Philokalia: 'keep guard over our heart, practicing the virtues which check the wickedness of our enemies.' This means to be still - calm your thoughts, still your mind and in the words of St Gregory of Sinai 'sit down and practice stillness. Stillness requires above all faith, patience, and love with all one's heart and strength and might.' When you

awaken you will remember all we have talked about." He dashed the contents of his lachrymatory bottle directly in my eyes.

I awoke lying on my back. There was a puddle of rain in my eyes. I was soaking wet and the rain blew coolly on my face. It was a dream, but it wasn't a "normal" dream. I wept tears of joy, tears of relief. I could see the lights of the town. It was dark. I rose to my feet and climbed into my crop duster. I knew I had a Bible in there, King James. I kept it there for luck; I never thought I would actually read it. As I began to read I felt a pebble in my shoe. I didn't stop to take it out I just read on. I started that plane and flew back home. When I arrived at the hanger I got out my copy of the King James. I sat at the desk and it fell open in my hands to Psalm 56:8. I read, "Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?" I cried tears afresh. I removed my muddy shoes and poured the pebble into my hand. It was black, shiny and translucent - Apache Tears. I put it in

my pocket and took my other shoe off. Barefoot I walked to the house. It was several miles but every rock reminded me of my dream. The rain stopped somewhere along the way. I sat down in the kitchen of that empty house. The silence surrounded me. I pulled the black pebble from my pocket, and rolled it around in my hand. I placed it back in my pocket. Sitting there in that straight back chair I closed my eyes. I noticed my bare feet touching the floor; I noticed the wet cloths touching my skin without another thought. I smelled the earthy smell of the mud on my clothes; I saw the dancing colors on the backs of my eyelids without a thought. I sat there in stillness and for the first time since my wife passed I wasn't sad. I just was.

When I opened my eyes, I felt as light as a feather, almost dizzy, surreal. I opened the Bible lying on the table to a place closer to the back and I read, "John 3:8 - The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof,

but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." I paused. That stillness came again and I "knew" that Spirit was all. It was all of me it was all of God. I closed the book and opened it again, closer to the middle this time and read, "Psalm 46:10, Be still, and know that I am God..." In the stillness I found the Kingdom of Heaven. I carried the Bible with me to my bedroom and turned on the light next to the bed. I lay down, and I read it. This time I started at the beginning, Genesis.

Several days went by. I started a pattern. Each morning I woke and read from the Bible, and then I sat in that same chair in that same place. I found that I could sit for twenty minutes easily. Then I would go about the tasks of the day. When I felt bad about anything: sad when I missed my wife or angry when a farmer wanted to pay less, I found that I could hold that pebble in my hand and my thoughts would return to that dream and my mind found stillness. The stillness of mind

always drove those bad thoughts away. In the evenings after supper I would open my Bible to those same three places from that first evening and then sit in that same chair and enjoy the peace of that stillness. When I finished occasionally I would shed a tear for the love of my life, my beautiful wife, Laraine, but it was always in the same stillness. I knew she was with me and I felt our love. After sitting I would retire to the bedroom and read some more from the Bible and go to sleep.

I thought about getting one of those little bottles.

The next day I had no crops to dust; so, when I finished what had become my morning ritual I went to the library to look into that passage from Psalms about the bottle. That's when I discovered the name for the bottle, lacrymatory bottle. I found that tear bottles were fairly common in Roman times, around the time of Christ, when mourners filled small glass

bottles or cups with tears and placed them in burial tombs as symbols of respect. Sometimes women were even paid to cry into these vessels, as they walked along the mourning procession. Those crying the loudest and producing the most tears received the most compensation, or so the legend goes. The more anguish and tears produced, the more important and valued the deceased person was perceived to be. I also ran across the idea of Utchat which is an amulet that has something to do with the Eye of Horus from Egypt. I noted the word, wanting to find out more about it later.

But I resolved to buy myself a lachrymatory bottle, nothing fancy, just a small bottle to collect the tears of love that fell from my eyes especially when I thought of Laraine. I found just what I needed at the general store. The bottle came full of essence of vanilla, but it was small and would fit easily in my pocket and felt good with the pebble in my other pocket. I emptied the bottle into the trash and slipped it in my pocket. Then I had a soda, my wife's favorite flavor, cherry red. I thought of our love and sipped that soda through a straw. I

pulled out that bottle and tried unsuccessfully to catch the tear of love that formed in my eye.

A few weeks passed during which time I was able to sit longer and go deeper into the stillness. I began to be almost addicted to the stillness; I couldn't get enough. Those times when I would sit in the silence were my favorite parts of each day. And I loved being fed by reading the Bible. I read the story of Joseph. He was the favorite son of Jacob. His daddy made him a coat of many colors. He had ten brothers who were jealous of this favorite of their father. While in a distant part of Jacob's land the older brothers had the idea to kill Joseph, but they had a small mercy, and so, they sold him into slavery and reported him dead to his father. But God showed favor to this son of Jacob. He was sold to the head man of all of Pharaoh's armies. Later, he was jailed for a perceived impropriety, and, after some years he was released after he read the Pharaoh's dream correctly. Pharaoh made Joseph second only to Pharaoh himself and gave him a wife, the daughter of an Egyptian priest. Joseph grew in knowledge

and influence especially as his interpretation of Pharaoh's dream came to pass exactly as predicted. He predicted drought was in all the land, and so, Jacob and all of Joseph's brothers ran short of food and fodder. Jacob called his sons together and sent them to Pharaoh to buy grain so that they would not perish. When the children of Israel arrived in Egypt, Joseph recognized his brothers but he kept his identity hidden, and spoke to them thru an interpreter. Secretly he turned from them and wept (tears of joy). He accused them of being spies and took Simon, one of the brothers, hostage until they could return with the youngest brother who was not among them. This would be proof that they were not spies in the land. Joseph loaded their donkeys with corn and sent them away, secretly placing their gold in the tops of their sacks. When the sons of Israel returned to their father Jacob, also called Israel, and told him of the events in Egypt and that Simon would not be released until they brought Benjamin, the youngest. Jacob wept (tears of grief and fear of grief) and refused to send his most beloved. But the famine

continued in the land and soon the corn they had gotten from Egypt began to run out. In his need, Jacob relented and directed his sons to return to Egypt taking even the youngest, Benjamin. They loaded the gold Pharaoh had mistakenly placed in the tops of their sacks and more gold to purchase the much needed corn and a gift from Jacob to Pharaoh. They set out on their way. When they arrived in Egypt, upon seeing Benjamin with them, Joseph invited the brothers to his house for dinner. The sons of Israel were nervous; they did not expect this. When they arrived they asked the steward of the house if the visit was because of the gold that they explained they found only when they arrived at the inn and had no idea how it had gotten into their sacks. The steward eased their minds and brought Simon to them, and they entered Joseph's house. When Joseph returned home he asked his brothers if the old man, their father, was still alive. They told Joseph that indeed he was alive and healthy and, upon seeing his baby brother Benjamin, Joseph was overcome with emotion and left the room and wept (tears of joy

for seeing his brothers, especially young Benjamin, and knowing that his father was well, but also tears of grief for all the events that occurred to bring them to this place). But truly his dream was about to come to pass. He finished his weeping, washed his face and returned to dinner and ordered the table set for a feast. They ate and were merry and all was good. But when the feast ended Joseph instructed his servant to fill all their bags with food and the gold that was brought to pay, all except the youngest. In Benjamin's bag place food and coins like the others, but in addition add my silver cup. And then he sent his Steward after his brothers to catch them and open the youngest brother's bag; then accuse him of theft and take him in custody. All this his servants did, and they restrained young Benjamin. When the brothers pleaded with Joseph he relented somewhat and agreed to let them go, but the cup bearer had to be his servant. At this, the sons of Joseph tore their cloths and explained, pleaded that their father would die if they returned without the youngest among them. Joseph could no longer restrain himself. He cried. He

ordered everyone but the Hebrews to leave. Then, with only the sons of Israel remaining in the room, Joseph explained to them who he was. Tearfully they embraced in greetings, especially when Joseph greeted Benjamin. The older brothers begged the forgiveness of their favored brother Joseph. He told them, "It was God who sent me here. He has made me like a son to Pharaoh. If you hadn't sold me into slavery the family would have starved and I wouldn't be in a position to give the bounty of Pharaoh to the House of Israel. You must return to my father and tell him all I have told you; tell him to bring the flocks and the herd, indeed all the property of the house. I will speak to Pharaoh on the morrow." He hugged Benjamin's neck and wept and likewise, Benjamin hugged his neck and wept. They returned to Canaan and told Jacob that Joseph was alive and Pharaoh promised them land in Goshen.

"And Israel said, 'it is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.'"

In this way the nation of Israel who grew out of the loins of Jacob came to be in Egypt. As a direct result Moses, the author of the Holy Book came to be raised and educated as a son of Pharaoh before he led Israel in the Exodus.

So, in my research, I found that the Tears of Re fall from the eye of the Sun and turn to honey. The Eye of Horus or Utchat is used as an amulet of regeneration, health and prosperity. It is also used as a protection from evil and represents rebirth, for the Sun is reborn anew each morning. Like the Sun, I felt reborn. My grief and suffering and all those tears cleansed my soul; I was a new man, regenerated, transformed by the renewal of my mind. I still felt those pangs of grief and tears fell from my eyes, but I caught them in my little bottle and remembered. Those moments brought me to an awareness of the eternal now, the kingdom within.

Horus was the ancient Egyptian sky god. His right eye was associated with the sun god Re. The eye symbol represents the

marking around the eye of the falcon, including the "teardrop" marking sometimes found below the eye. The mirror image, or left eye, represents the moon and the god Thoth. When Set and Horus were fighting for the throne after Osiris's death, Set gouged out Horus's left eye. The majority of the eye was restored by Thoth with the remainder created magically. When Horus's eye was recovered, he offered it to his father, Osiris, in hopes of restoring his life...and my life was restored. But tomorrow will be my wife's birthday.

Laraine liked birthdays. And her birthday was the highlight of her year. I would plan it out. There would be a party with all of our closest friends, not many maybe a dozen, on the weekend before. Then on that special day I would cook a dinner and we would spend that evening in quiet intimacy. We ate by candle light with a single red rose in the center of the table. Many couples would have Champaign, but not Laraine, she wanted all of her senses in full brightness for

the wonderful pleasures we would share that night. Our coupling was a slow and considered intimacy full of sharing and the most sensual pleasures and caresses. I can't begin to describe the beauty of our love making. But there would be none of that tomorrow. She was on the other side, but I felt her with me. I cried.

I woke the morning of her birthday with a vivid memory of a dream. I wrote it down. I was in the monk's hut again. It was night time and the only light was the single lantern. The holy man motioned for me to sit at the small table again and moved gracefully to sit upright on the small bunk. "You are troubled," he said. "Let me tell you a story. Stephen, a young seeker of truth, visited one master after another. He called upon Saint John. Desiring to show his attainment, he said: 'The mind and sentient beings, after all, do not exist. The true nature of phenomena is emptiness. There is no realization, no delusion, no sage, and no mediocrity. There is no giving and nothing to be received.'

Saint John, who was smoking quietly, said nothing. Suddenly he whacked Stephen with his pipe. This made the youth quite angry. 'If nothing exists,' inquired the saint, 'where did this anger come from?' Think on this story and listen and he began another story.

"The early fathers tell us to abandon the cares of the world, and the principalities and powers that lie behind them: free yourself from attachment to material things, from domination by passions and desires, so that as a stranger to all this you may attain true stillness. For only by raising himself above these things can a man achieve the kingdom of God, stillness. Be like an astute business man: make stillness your criterion for testing the value of everything, and choose always what contributes to it. If a jar of wine is left in the same place for a long time, the wine in it becomes clear, settled and fragrant. But if it is moved about, the wine becomes turbid and dull, tainted throughout by the lees. So you, too, should stay in the same place and you will find how greatly this benefits you. Do not have relationships with too many people,

lest your intellect becomes distracted and so disturbs the way of stillness. Remember the day of death, visualize the dying of your body, reflect on this calamity, experience the pain, reject the vanity of this world, its compromises and crazes, so that you may continue in the way of stillness and not weaken. Call to mind, also, what is even now going on in the hell of separation from the One. Think of the suffering, the bitter silence, the terrible moaning, the great fear and agony, the dread of what is to come, the unceasing pain, the endless weeping. Lament and weep for the sentence passed on sinners, every day is the Day of Judgment; mourn while you are doing this, frightened that you, too, may be among them. But rejoice and be glad at the blessings that await the righteous thinking, and aspire to enjoy them and to be delivered from the torments of hell. See to it that you never forget these things. Be aware. Man cannot drive away impassioned thoughts unless he watches over his desire and incensive power. He destroys desire through fasting, vigils and sleeping on the ground, and he tames his incensive power

through long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness and acts of compassion. Catch your tears in a bottle, aware of each one, where it came from. What were the thoughts, the feelings? Where is your attention? Always know where your attention is."

"If you wish to pray as you should, deny yourself attachment all the time, and when any kind of affliction troubles you, meditate on prayer. If you endure something painful out of love for wisdom, you will find the fruit of this during prayer. If you desire to pray as you ought, do not grieve anyone."

"Sorrow is: grief, uncertainty, the feeling of complete loneliness. There is the sorrow of death, the sorrow of not being able to fulfil oneself, the sorrow of not being recognized, the sorrow of loving and not being loved in return. There are innumerable forms of sorrow, and it seems that without understanding sorrow, there is no end to

conflict, to misery, to the everyday travail of corruption and deterioration."

"There is conscious sorrow, and there is also unconscious sorrow, the sorrow that seems to have no basis, no immediate cause. Most of us know conscious sorrow, and we also know how to deal with it. Either we run away from it through religious belief or we rationalize it, or we take some kind of drug, whether intellectual or physical; or we bemuse ourselves with words, with amusements, with superficial entertainment. We do all this, and yet we cannot get away from conscious sorrow.

Then there is the unconscious sorrow that we have inherited through the centuries. Man has always sought to overcome this extraordinary thing called sorrow, grief, misery; but even when we are superficially happy and have everything we want, deep down in the unconscious there are still the roots of sorrow. So when we talk about the ending of sorrow, we mean the ending of all sorrow, both conscious and

unconscious. To end sorrow one must have a very clear, very simple mind. Simplicity is not a mere idea. To be simple demands a great deal of intelligence and sensitivity.

The Sun rose and a beam of light came through the window and a tear fell from my eye; with practiced efficiency I caught it in the small bottle. Happy Birthday Laraine!

I read The Adventures at Walden Pond. Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself. I look out at my eyes, I come to my window, and feel and breathe the fresh air. A tear forms and I catch it in my tiny bottle. It is a fact equally glorious with the most inward experience. A man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to let alone. In short, I am convinced, both by faith and experience, that to maintain one's self on this earth is not a hardship but a pastime, if we will live simply and wisely. It is not necessary that a man should earn his living by the

sweat of his brow, unless he sweats more easier than I do. It is necessary that he live. Man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to let alone. If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them. Manifest. The cost of a thing is the amount of what I call life which is required to be exchanged for it. In any weather, at any hour of the day or night, I have been anxious to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and the future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line.

Nobody wants to suffer. When we are in pain we spend most of our energy trying to figure out how to get out of pain. You put your hand in a fire, it burns, the hand moves. For most of us, if we are suffering, or more appropriately, if we are "in suffering", because we cannot "be" suffering, it can be peaceful to practice "conscious suffering".

Most of the time when we are suffering it's because we believe we shouldn't be having the experience we are having. "I

shouldn't be dying", "I shouldn't have lost Laraine", etc. We are resisting what is happening and fighting the "Reality" of the situation. We are hurting and we want it to stop!

Pain is typically a warning that something needs to be addressed, although sometimes we inflict pain because it's what we are used to, or we don't know any better. But what's wrong is never the situation itself, that's always neutral. What's wrong is our thinking or judgement of the situation.

You may say to me, "Ron, my stomach hurts... it hurts!" And I would say to you, "yes, your stomach hurts or so it seems, but you make it hurt that much worse when you add a negative story to it." We can't just stop at "my stomach hurts". Your stomach hurting is a relative fact. But the fact that you don't like that your stomach hurts, or you have to miss work and you can't afford to, or you had plans for the weekend you have to cancel and now you're going to miss out, or whatever...therein lies the judgement and the creation of the negative story. We often don't stop at the facts themselves but

in a gross act of self sabotage we add a lot of extra mess onto it that increases our suffering. I cried a single tear and deftly caught in my small bottle.

The other part of conscious suffering is looking at what the experience is meant to teach us. Now we could argue that finding the meaning behind the suffering is the creation of more stories, and that is very true. However, isn't it more kind and peaceful to believe a happy story than a painful one? Every day is Judgement Day!

When we shift our focus to the recurring messages of our life events we start to look at our experiences on a deeper level and remain open to the possibilities of what we are being shown about ourselves. Yes, it's always about us. It can't not be.

The days went by sometimes I was happy and sometimes I was sad, but I became more and more aware. I wrote the story. I kept the pebble in one pocket and the little bottle in the other.

One night I had a dream. I felt a terror. I looked down from the corner of the room and saw myself in bed. I was really, really small, a child, and a large smooth sphere was rolling toward me from above. I tried to hide under the covers and make myself even smaller, but the ball kept coming. As it moved all features were consumed by the ball and made into a smooth even surface. I could feel the terror of the little man, me, trying to disappear into the bed as the covers and the lumpy mattress all became perfectly smooth and the sphere rolled closer. I watched from the corner with the ceiling in horror as the ball consumed me. I shed a tear. And a feeling of relief came over me as I completely let go and rested my being on a cloud of faith. The sphere unfolded hitherto unseen wings and lifted into the air. The room disappeared. I was surrounded by stars and the Earth was far below as the winged globe lifted slowly and steadily higher. The globe began to glow with a perfectly white light more intense than the Sun. A tear began to form as I shut my eyes to the blinding, white light. With closed eyes I discovered that I

could see from the single eye of the globe. I was not only connected; I was undifferentiated from the monad. I spread my wings and soared on holy breath back to source.

Gently I woke. I felt peaceful. Was I still in the dream? I began my morning ritual with the greatest stillness I have felt to this time. As I opened my eyes from the silence it occurred to me that I needed a haircut.

I went to the barber shop. I don't remember it being crowded. I really only remember one man reading a paper. On its cover was a winged globe! I remembered my dream. The paper was published in Kansas City. A tear fell from my eye as I sat down to wait my turn. That is where I need to go, I thought to myself.

I packed the belongings I needed, which wasn't much, into my bi-plane. I left the next morning.

Ronald P. Vincent